

Clinton inauguration medal is available

By Roger Boye

An artist who paints dancers and nudes has sculpted the "official medal" that commemorates next Wednesday's inauguration of William Jefferson Clinton (as the medal has it) as the 42nd U.S. president.

Among other things, the medal depicts a gazing Clinton and a scene inspired by the song "America the Beautiful." Clinton selected the design of himself from a handful of entries.

"It's been a madhouse rush," said Michael Hoffman, co-founder of Hoffman & Hoffman of Carmel, Calif., the company that's making the medal. Hoffman and his associates had just a few weeks to turn their idea for an inaugural medal into

a finished product.

Hoffman & Hoffman's in-house sculptor, Jesse Wallace Corsaut, executed both the "heads" and "tails" designs in full relief, and his last name is engraved on one side of the medal. Corsaut also is a figure and portrait painter who attempts to bring a sense of realism to his art.

The designs were drawn by Hoffman's brother, Charles, the company's other co-founder. He devised the "America the Beautiful" motif—including depictions of "amber waves of grain" and "purple mountain majesties"—for the reverse side.

Similar "official medals" have been issued for every presidential inauguration this century, and some of them have become prized collectibles. For example,

a 1921 bronze medal of Warren G. Harding often retails for \$5,000 or more, in part because only a few are known to exist.

Retail prices for the Clinton medal are \$35 for the 2¾-inch bronze; \$175 for the 2½-inch, 5-ounce silver, .999 fine; and \$925 for a three-medal set that includes a 27-millimeter, 24-karat gold specimen weighing about two-thirds of an ounce (postage is extra). No more than 25,000 silver medals and 900 gold-medal sets will be made.

Companies selling the Clinton medal include Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc. (telephone, toll-free, 1-800-222-5993); PandaAmerica (1-800-472-6327); and Presidential Coin and Antique Company, Inc. (1-800-484-4057, and dial 3119 after the message).